The University of Chicago

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ORTHODOXY IN MASSACHUSETTS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
1931

By
PERRY GILBERT EDDY MILLER

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CHAPTER FOUR

NON-SEPARATIST CONGREGATIONALISM

For what we may apologetically term pedagogical purposes, we have hitherto considered Puritanism as practically synonymous with Presbyterianism. Although we have admitted this is a stringent restriction of the term, we have seen it does not altogether violate the facts, for the core of the Puritan movement was undoubtedly constituted by that group who wished the ecclesiastical system of Geneva and Scotland to prevail in England. It is, of course, demonstrable that many, perhaps the greater number, of reputed Puritans entertained but vague conceptions of the discipline. Moreover the first English sketches of Presbyterianism, those of Cartwright, Travers, and Udall, were of a somewhat Utopian character, and many of the disciples seem to have accepted them without possessing any too concise notions of detailed provisions. Those who encouraged the movement chiefly as a means of protest against Stuart absolutism were even less aware of specific plans. When Hyde asked Fiennes in the summer of 1641 what government he and his party wished to substitute for the hierarchy, Fiennes answered "that there would be time enough to think of that,"[1] and when Sir Philip Warwick asked Cromwell the same

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[1] Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon (Oxford, 1827), I, 90-91.

question, he blurted out, "I can tell you, Sirs, what I would not have, tho' I cannot, what I would."[1] Richard Baxter affirms that before the year 1641 he had "never thought what Presbytery or Independency was, nor ever spoke with a man who seemed to know it,"[2] and all dissenting schemes looked so much alike to the authorities that Laud inscribed an intercepted document describing the church government in Massachusetts, "Great newes out of New England touching the presbyterial government as it seems established there."[3] As long as the reform remained primarily a negative movement, as long as the suppressing activities of the government held discussion down, and as long as many individuals became allied with the movement out of antagonism to the Court, the "Puritan party" remained amorphous.

However, in combating Separatists the Presbyterian advocates took some steps toward clarifying their proposal. They were compelled not only to condemn the act of separation, but they had as well to refute the Congregational version of the Bible. They denied the existence of scriptural warrant for discrimination in the admission of church members, and emphasized explicitly the centralized power of classes and synods.

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[1] Sir Philip Warwick, Memoirs of the Reign of King Charles I (London, 1701), p. 177.

[2] Benjamin Hanbury (editor), Historical Memorials relating to the Independents and Congregationalists from Their Rise to the Restoration (London, 1839-44), II, 69.

[3] Cal. St. Pap., Colonial, I, 194.

But in an age when men habitually made unto themselves a fetish of the literal application of Scripture, and assiduously racked their consciences to find more and more rigorous methods of subjecting themselves to Christ, one who entered the polemical lists to combat a radical version of the Bible was always in danger of finding that very radicalism attractive. Precisely this had happened in the case of Francis Johnson, who, as a Puritan, undertook to refute Congregationalism, was overpowered by the proof Barrowe offered, and turned Separatist himself.[1] Since historical Biblical scholarship was practically non-existent, a man's emotional reaction to the cryptic utterances of the Word was bound to be his only criterion of what they signified.

Thus, though Separatism as an organized movement proved a forlorn hope, still the discipline it proposed was at least plausibly construed from the Bible. During the reign of James we suddenly encounter a small group of men who were to all intents and purposes Puritans, who were insistently anti-Separatists, but who had, nevertheless, quietly accepted the Separatists' discipline. The genesis of their opinion is unfortunately not to be traced in the present state of our knowledge, but Henry Jacob seems to offer an indication of what happened. He began as a Puritan, and was among the dis-

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[1] William Bradford, "Dialogue," Alexander Young, Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers (Boston, 1841), pp. 424-25.

senting ministers who endeavoured to demonstrate their loyalty to the church by nagging Separatist prisoners in the Clink; his correspondence with Francis Johnson was published in 1599 as A defence of the Churches and Ministry of England, and was one of the host of Puritan condemnations of the Separatist way. In 1603 he was a moving spirit in the Millenary Petition, which was advanced in the interests of Presbyterianism, but in the following year, in his Reasons taken out of Gods Word, he suddenly emerged as an advocate of a clearly Congregational reformation. How much of his conversion he owed to Johnson cannot be determined, but the fact remains he was converted.[1] The development of other men in the group is even more mysterious than that of Jacob, but their published works indisputably reveal that whatever their starting points, they came ultimately to the same termination.

In addition to Jacob the school produced at least four conspicuous spokesmen. There was Robert Parker (died 1617), who fled from the spiritual courts to Holland in 1607 and was for a time associated with Jacob at Leyden. William Bradshaw (died 1618) published the fullest account of the group's tenets in a series of able anonymous pamphlets, which historians have strangely overlooked. He was the center of an important group of ministers in the vicinity of Stephenhill, Derbyshire. Paul

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[1] Dictionary of National Biography; Champlin Burrage, Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (London, 1912), I, 281-86; II, 292-93.

Baynes (died 1617) was the preacher of the school. He was lecturer at St. Andrews, Cambridge, but was deprived for non-conformity, and led thereafter a peripatetic existence as the guest of Puritan patrons all over England. Greatest of the lot undoubtedly was Dr. William Ames (died 1633), about whom the others seem to have revolved. He was a student and friend of Baynes, was in communication with Bradshaw, and was associated with Jacob and Parker at Leyden in 1610. He was, moreover, a man of international importance, advisor to the Calvinist party at the Synod of Dort, for ten years professor of theology at the University of Franeker, and the author of several widely circulated theological tomes.

The writings of these men, although showing some minor differences, reveal their agreement upon the two essential features of the Congregational polity, viz., restriction of church membership to the proved elect and the autonomy of particular congregations. Jacob defined a church in 1605 as "a particular Congregation being a spiritual perfect Corporation of Believers, & having power in it selfe immediately from Christ to administer all Religious meanes of faith to the members thereof."[1] It was, he later put it more happily, "an entire and Independent body-politic."[2] It could be formed only

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[1] Ibid., II, 157.

[2] "A Declaration and Plainer Opening" (1612), Hanbury, Historical Memorials, I, 231.

by "a free mutuall consent of Believers joyning & covenanting to live as Members of a holy Society togeather in all religious & vertuous duties as Christ & his Apostles did institute & practise in the Gospell."[1] On his return from Holland in 1616 he actually proceeded to organize a church on these lines at Southwark.[2] After 1604 he constantly attacked Presbyterianism: "I affirme that no Synod vnder ye Gospell hath power by Gods ordinance to prescribe & rule Ecclesiastically sundry whole Churches if they consent not."[3] Such "ruling Synods and vnited Presbyteries exercising government ... are not onely humane institutions but ... altogether vnlawfull."[4] There were, he admitted, "sundrie godlie men" who upheld the power of synods,[5] but with them he begged leave to differ; in 1610, when he presented one of his many petitions to James, that monarch at once perceived the rift in Puritan ranks, for where Jacob had declared against synods James wrote in the margin, "but in this, your Skottish brethren are endewed with a contraire light."[6] Bradshaw declared, "Wee confine and bound all Ecclesiastical power within the limits onely of one particular Congregation,

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1 Burrage, op. cit., II, 157.

2 Ibid., I, 312-26; II, 293-305.

3 Ibid., II, 165.

4 To the right High and mightie Prince, Iames (1609), p. 13.

5 Reasons taken out of Gods Word (1604), sig. A3 recto; p. 31.

6 John Waddington, Congregational History (London, 1869-80), II, 176.

houlding that the greatest Ecclesiasticall power ought not to stretch beyond the same."[1] A church should consist only of "true believers, joyning together according to the order of the Gospell,"[2] and it could not be subjected "to any other Superior Ecclesiasticall Jurisdiction then unto that which is within it selfe;" over it "there is noe superior Pastor but onely Jesus Christ." If a church is in error, officers of other churches have no power to censure or punish it, "but are onely to counsell or advise the same."[3] Bradshaw was as much opposed to the Presbyterians as to the bishops: "Thou maist herein observe," he said in the preface to his most important work, English Puritanisme, "what a terrible Popedome & Primacie these rigid Presbyterians desire. And with what painted bugbears and Scare Crowes the Prelates goe about to fright the State of the Kingdome."[4] Baynes preached Congregationalism up and down England; John Robinson attributed to one of his sermons his own realization that mixed congregations were unlawful.[5] Baynes' most important work, The Diocesans Trial, issued posthumously in 1621, was an attack upon all ecclesiastical superstructures.

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[1] "Protestation of the King's Supremacie" (1605), Several Treatises of Worship and Ceremonies (Cambridge and Oxford, 1660), pp. 91-92.

[2] English Puritanisme Containeing the Maine Opinions of the Rigidest Sort of Those Called Puritanes (London, 1640), p. 6.

[3] Ibid., pp. 7, 11.

[4] Ibid., p. 2.

[5] John Robinson, "A manumission to a manudiction" (1615), Mass. Hist. Soc., Coll., Ser. 4, I, 193.

"We affirm that no such head church was ordained either virtually or actually, but that all churches were singular congregations, equal, independent each of other, in regard of subjection."[1] For a congregation to be subject "to a Presbyterie, as not having power of governing themselves within themselves," was to his way of thinking as bad as for it to be subject to a bishop.[2] When Parker sojourned with Jacob at Leyden he professed "the use of Synods was for counsell and advice onely, but had not authority to give definite sentence in the judging of causes;" he later, however, proved apostate to the cause and joined himself with John Paget, an exiled Puritan then ministering in Amsterdam to an English Presbyterian church. For this defection of Parker's Paget says "some of Mr. Iacobs minde were offended with him,"[3] but he had already done his important work, and John Cotton cited him along with Baynes and Ames as a protagonist of Congregationalism.[4] William Ames gave Bradshaw's English Puritanisme an international circulation by translating it into Latin in 1610, and he rescued Baynes' Diocesans Trial from oblivion. Paget says he often complained to Ames that his translation of Bradshaw did a grave injustice to the majority of English Puritans, who held nothing like the

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[1] The Diocesans Trial (1621), p. 13.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] John Paget, A Defence of Church Government (London, 1641), p. 105.

[4] John Cotton, The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared (London, 1648), Part II, p. 23.

tenets that book set forth, but Ames put him off by saying it "did not affirme those to be the opinions of all, but onely of the Rigidest sort of those that are called Puritans."[1] He wrote the preface to Baynes' book, "maintaining the divine constitution of a particular Church, in one Congregation,"[2] and subtly disseminated the doctrine in his great works, his Medulla Theologiae and his De Conscientia.

It will be noticed that the principles of this school found their fullest expression in Holland. In England, where all Puritan energies were directed against the common foe, the hierarchy, differences between the two wings of the party did not become prominent; but when exiled Puritans gained an opportunity to attempt a positive reformation in the Low Countries, their divergences became apparent, and their verbal controversies of this date anticipate the historic rift of the Presbyterians and Independents in the 1640's. John Paget took up the defense of the Presbyterian cause, and what light early Congregationalists do not throw upon the cleavage themselves, can be supplemented by his descriptions. He defined the polity of Jacob and Ames accurately as one "whereby Particular Congregations are made to be Independent, not standing under any other ecclesiastical authority out of themselves."[3] He

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1 John Paget, op. cit., pp. 106, 200.

2 The Diocesans Trial, sig. B1 recto.

3 Paget, "Answer to an unjust complaint"(1635), Hanbury, Historical Memorials, I, 527.

had the acumen to see that this polity was essentially the same as that of the Separatists.[1] So conspicuous had become the split between the two factions of English Puritan exiles that when a friend of Ames, John Forbes, petitioned the Dutch Synod to permit the erection of an independent English classis, the officials turned him down because, they said, too many of the English ministers were either Brownists or "Brownistically affected in particular opinions," because they

> condemne the Decisive and Iudging power of all Classes & Synods; & that they have only a power of counsailing & advising, because every particular Congregation is a church; and that a compleat church, and that it is Immediately given vnto every congregation from Christ to be a single & vncompounded policy.

These, the synod declared, "are the very words of Mr. Iacob, & Parker, & Baines."[2]

There can be little doubt that these men were Congregationalists. But there can also be no doubt that though their discipline was the same as that of the Separatists, and though they were just as much opposed to Presbyterianism, they were not themselves Separatists. They would admit being the "rigidest sort of Puritans," but nothing more. Jacob, recognizing the similarity of his program with the polity of Separatists, could say he did not regard them as "being so evill as commonly they are held to be," but as for himself, "I never was, nor

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1 Paget, A Defence of Church Government (1641), p. 30.

2 Burrage, op. cit., II, 271; Cal. St. Pap., Domestic, 1635, Vol. CCLXXXVI, No. 94.

am, separated from all public communion with the congregations of England."[1] "The Lord knoweth there is none in England more unwilling to runne vpon this rocke then I."[2] Members of his church in Southwark held a consultation with the remnants of Barrowe's church in London in 1619 and manifested to the latter that they "never intended separation from the Church of England,"[3] so that the Separatists concluded "Iakobs people" were still "idolators".[4] At no time in his career, Cotton says, was Parker "one of those whom you call Brownists, or such like Separatists, but wrote against them,"[5] and Richard Clyfton accused him of aiding and abetting the scurrilous anti-Separatist pamphlets of Christopher Lawne in 1612 and 1613.[6] Ames consistently condemned schism in his larger works, attempted to derive the polity of his school out of the great Puritan champions, Cartwright, Fenner, and Perkins[7] -- which contention Paget justly denied[8] -- and boasted to the bishops that he and his friends had "soundly confuted" the Brownists.[9] In fact,

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[1] "A declaration and plainer opening"(1612), Hanbury, op. cit., I, 230.

[2] Reasons taken out of God's Word, p. 50.

[3] Burrage, op. cit., I, 172.

[4] Ibid., p. 314; cf. Robinson, Works (Boston, 1851), III, 382.

[5] Cotton, The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, Part II, p. 12.

[6] Hanbury, op. cit., I, 239.

[7] The Diocesans Trial, sig. A2 recto.

[8] Paget, A Defence of Church Government, passim.

[9] Ames, A Reply to Dr.Morton's Generall Defence(1622), p. 31.

one of the greatest testimonies to the position of the school was the influence it exerted upon John Robinson. In 1610 when Parker, Ames, and Jacob were in Leyden, they conferred long and laboriously with the Pilgrim pastor,[1] and they so much convinced him of the superior wisdom of their Non-separating position that he did all in his power to retrace his steps in their direction. Since he had so vigorously spoken for the way of "rigid Separation" he could not entirely renounce it, but he did come "more then halfe way of any just distance"[2] by conceding the Church of England possessed some marks of a true church, that therefore persons might be saved though they remained in it, and that Separatists might lawfully hear its ministers. "I did," he says, "through my vehement desire of peace, and weakness withal, remit and lose my former resolution: and did, to speak as the truth is, forget some of my former grounds."[3] Paget, on the look-out for Congregational inconsistencies, claimed at once that when Robinson made these concessions he threw away the original cause for his secession; how, he asked, could Robinson admit persons to his congregation without requiring them first to renounce their allegiance to the Church of England, "seeing that by your reasoning they are tyed in

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[1] William Bradford, "Dialogue," Alexander Young, Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers, p. 439; Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, ed. Thomas Robbins (Hartford, 1855), Bk. I, Chap.ii, par. 1.

[2] Cotton, op. cit., Part I, pp. 7-8.

[3] Robinson, Works, III, 103.

the cords of sin?"[1] The advantages of the less rigorous position became patent, however, when the congregation wished to secure official permission for the migration to America, and they then loyally protested that, as they held the doctrine of the church was sound, they therefore could willingly acknowledge that "saving fayth" was begotten "in thousands in ye land (conformists & reformistes) as ye ar called," with both of whom they desired to maintain spiritual communion "as wth our brethereen."[2]

When men in good Queen Bess's day had become convinced God wished them to be Congregationalists, in their straightforward fashion they could see no way to avoid separating from the Church of England. Yet here we are confronted with a group of Congregationalists, men skilled in the logic of the schools, who believed quite as sincerely in the same divinely appointed polity, and who yet refused to make the fatal deduction of Separation. We can easily appreciate their motive, for events had proved that in the way of separation political madness lay. And yet by all the laws of logic, did not Congregationalism make Separation imperative, and was not such a furtive institution as Jacob's Southwark church a schismatical enterprise? How could these men stifle the promptings of their

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[1] Paget, An Arrow against the Separation of the Brownists (Amsterdam, 1618), p. 73.

[2] Williston Walker (ed.), Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (New York, 1893), p. 89; cf. Bradford, "Dialogue," in Alexander Young, Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers, p. 457.

creed, how could they justify the glaring inconsistencies of their position?

By the exercise of a superlative genius for casuistry, the school did make out a case, it did find ways to reconcile irreconcilables. Its solution may seem to us utterly fantastic, we may with difficulty believe that any men, much less sincerely religious men, ever told so thin a story and then so doggedly stuck to it; but to understand their psychology we must realize what they conceived was at stake, what tremendous urgencies drove them to such desperate shifts. Separatists had flown in the face of the deepest political conviction of the sixteenth century, a conviction that was fortified not only by the prevailing philosophy of social cohesion and subordination, but by centuries of experience. They not merely attacked certain vested interests, but by rending the seamless garment of the Church they opened up a whole prospect of social demoralization. When, therefore, the "Jacobites", as Paget called them, confronted the problem of reformation, they were completely pervaded by the Puritan determination to keep themselves clear of Separation at all costs. Though they might strain their metaphysics to the breaking point, they were compelled by some hook or crook to reconcile their Congregational dissent with the inviolable preservation of the principle of uniformity. Their plea might be a cob-web of sophistry, their conduct might amount to virtual schism, but that did not matter if by their own rationalization they could write for themselves

a clean bill of political health.

The Separatist argument had been phrased in this fashion: a church could not be a true church wherein the elect communicated with the reprobate; in the Church of England the elect did so communicate; ergo, the Church of England was a false church. The Non-separating Congregationalists necessarily began with the same assumption; the only way, then, in which they could break the chain of this syllogism was by denying the proposition, by asserting that the Church of England was a true one, or, to speak more accurately, by asserting the churches of England were true churches. Manifestly they did not seem so, but Presbyterians had already hinted at a way in which the assertion might be risked, with their ingenious distinction between a true "substance" and a number of false but not mortal "accidents". Still, it had been a comparatively easy matter for Cartwright and the Presbyterians to read their plan into the Church of England, for they called at the utmost for a mere remodeling of the existing structure, and they confidently expected to rebuild upon the same foundations. But when Ames and Bradshaw set about to prove to an unsuspecting nation that the "substance" of the established parishes was, au fond, Congregational, they had very considerably to extend the list of "accidents". They had to condemn not only ceremonies and ritual, but the very idea of a centralized government and at least two-thirds of the church membership. These items they did not intend to remodel but to dispense with entirely.

They had to have the effrontery to allege that by these extensive nullifications they would be touching nothing vital, but only stripping superficial encumbrances from the true church, that somehow, in a fashion unbeknownst to the bishops and the government, a number of "saints" in each parish of the realm had for ages been unconsciously functioning in an essentially Congregational manner. It takes, to say the least, a large audacity to pretend when you are amputating arms and legs that you are only removing warts and moles, and that the patient will need no anaesthetic, but these ecclesiastical surgeons were in all seriousness making precisely such an asseveration.

The Separatists, they said, had gone astray, not in their conception of polity, but in rashly concluding that organizations which differed in minor details from that polity were immediately to be forsaken. Even granting that such variations were unlawful, they should have first ascertained whether they were absolutely fatal to the organization, as were the accretions of Popery to the Church of Rome.

> The defect of some ordinances, though it ought not to be approved, yet it may be tollerated; because an imperfection, whether in private persons, or in a publike State doth not take away the nature of that office. 1

It was by no means certain that though the parish assemblies were in a bad way, their condition was altogether hopeless.

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1 William Ames, Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof (London, 1643), p. 64.

True, the laws did maintain many corrupt practices, "yet so long as we doe not actually communicate in those corruptions, but onely in the true parts of Gods worship, our communicating is never the worse for the said Laws of men."[1] At this point a puzzled John Robinson rose to object; were not all people in England forced to attend communion, and was not a set form of prayer then used, and were not these things simply unlawful? Indeed, Ames blandly returned, they were, but they were matters which could be disregarded, "seeing there are many exercises of religion, wherein none are present by constraint, and where the service book doeth not so much as appeare."[2] As long as the Church of England left a remote possibility for the occasional existence of these voluntary services, it was paying tribute to the substratum of Congregationalism in its make up, and to that extent remained a true church. We should labor while we were in it to make its membership pure, but from a fundamentally true church "in which some wicked men are tollerated, we must not presently separate."[3]

But, the Separatist persisted, you teach churches should properly be founded upon a covenant; have the parish assemblies sworn to any? No, they had not done so formally and publicly, but that did not hinder their having done practically

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[1] William Bradshaw, The Unreasonableness of the separation(1640) p. 107.

[2] Ames, A Manvdiction for Mr. Robinson (1614), sig. Q4 recto.

[3] Ames, Conscience, p. 62.

the same thing. Whenever "good Christians" assembled to worship God, and did so voluntarily, were they not moved by a visible desire to serve Him in Christian fellowship? So, then, they could be said to have "the essentiall & integrall forme of a visible church ... howsoever they are defective in the puritie of their combination, & in the complete free exercising of their power."[1] They may never have expressly ratified a covenant, but in some rare spiritual sense it had to be predicated:

> They want not that reall and substantiall comming together (or agreeing in Covenant, though more implicite then were meete) and that substantiall profession of Faith, which (thanks be to God) hath preserved the essence of visible Churches in England unto this day. [2]

If the good Christians of a parish came to service voluntarily, even if the bad ones were also there by constraint, they actually achieved a covenant with God. They became, by the very difference of their motive, as much separated from the unbelievers "as is of absolute necessitie to the being of a true church."[3] By the very laws of the land, Bradshaw could argue, the parishes

> are so far forth separated from the world, joyned together in the communion of the Gospell by the voluntary profession of faith, and freed from Antichrist, &c. as is sufficient to make them true visible Churches of

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[1] Ames, A Second Manvdiction for Mr. Robinson(1615), p. 34.

[2] Robert Parker, Politea Ecclesiastica, quoted and translated Richard Mather, An apologie of the chvrches in New England (1643), p. 36.

[3] Ames, op. cit., p. 31.

> Christ; notwithstanding that many things may be wanting to the full and desired perfection of them. [1]

Separation from them was, therefore, an inconsiderate and schismatical act.

The prize bit of circumlocution in this reasoning was evoked by the question of the ministry. In Congregational theory pastors ought to be chosen by the people; in Anglican practice they were nominated by a patron and installed by a bishop. Could these two principles be reconciled, so that pastors might be Congregationalists and still hold their jobs? Nothing, it seemed, was simpler. If an Anglican clergyman based his calling upon an episcopal ordination, accounting himself indelibly a minister apart from a particular flock, he was doing something "unlawful and sinful".[2] But in actuality, once a man was ordained he was assigned to a particular parish. What, pray tell, was then to hinder the godly of the parish from accepting him as their pastor and regarding their acceptance as the "substance" of his calling? The other business could be regarded as negligible abracadabra. A patron's nomination could not create a valid summons, "yet the after consent of the people, by acceptance and submission, may make it good;"[3] a man could not become pastor of a parish because a bishop invested

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[1] Bradshaw , op. cit., p. 82.

[2] Jacob, "A Confession and Protestation" (1616), p. 20. Ms copy by Josiah H. Benton, Jr., in the Boston Public Lib.

[3] John Davenport, An Apologeticall Reply (Rotterdam, 1636), p. 46.

him, but he could because "a believing Congregation ... consenteth to have him."[1]

> The true ratification and warrant of our Ministers calling which is by Gods word, standeth in this, & only in this, that our Visible Churches do consent and accept them whom they receave for such ... And this their consent, I acknowledge, giveth them (before God) their Ministry, though conioyned with many, great, & publique corruptions otherwayes. 2

It would evidently have been quite ethical, according to the standards of these men, for candidates to go through the rites of ordination with their tongues in their cheeks: they

> therein refuse obedience and conformitie to whatsoever in the Prelates calling they judge unlawfull, and so doe not joyne an unlawfull and a Lawfull calling together: but reject the corruptions, retain the good, and supply the defect with an other calling. 3

Securing leave to preach from a bishop need not "allways implie an acknowledgement of his lawfull authoritie from whome it is sought."[4] As long as it remained possible for a divine to pick his diffident way through the morass of Anglican corruptions, and with the aid of a few pardonable false pretences to hold himself comparatively uncontaminated by them, he could continue in reality a Congregational pastor, however externally he appeared to be a priest in the Establishment. Therefore, his parishioners should not separate from him.

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1 Jacob, op. cit., p. 19.

2 Jacob, Reasons taken out of Gods Word, p. 50.

3 Bradshaw, op. cit., p. 88.

4 Ames, op. cit., p. 6.

When Ames labored to make this abstruse point clear to John Robinson, the latter not unnaturally remonstrated that such an attractive "plot of ministry" was framed in Ames' study, and that as a matter of sober fact the Church of England allowed "no such calling as is chiefly grounded upon the people's choice; but only that which is grounded upon the bishop's ordination."[1] "But what the Church of England alloweth," Ames retorted, "maketh nothing to the question." If by any stretch of imagination one could conceive that a minister might attribute his real calling to the congregation and could "get away" with it, then the Church of England had not waxed utterly corrupt. "For a minister to lay the chief ground of his calling upon the peoples choice, so that he haue withall those formallities required, I knowe no law in England that doeth forbid or disallow it."[2] Suppose, Ames asked, a man should procure a license from a bishop and a patron, yet should assume his charge professedly upon the people's choice; suppose, indeed, that in order to get his license he had to perform some things which he knew were not lawful, yet suppose all the while he continued to hold his faith "in the maine things of the ghospell;" might not, under these circumstances, "some faults of his entrance bee circumstantiall personal actions by which his

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1 Robinson, "A Manvmission to a Manvdiction," Mass. Hist. Soc., Coll., Ser. 4, I, 170, 173.

2 Ames, op. cit., p. 10.

calling is not abolished?"[1] Even if he was compelled to carry out some commands of the bishop, he did not become thereby "a branch of the prelacie ... neither doe the people receiue him in that name, but on other & better groundes."[2] His parishioners, conscious of these nice distinctions, could communicate with him without sharing in the corrupt aspects of his office. "We joyne," Jacob protested, "onely to that which is true in the sayd Ministry."[3] "To communicate spiritually with any ministers whatsoever onely in the holy things of Christ, is not to communicate with the ministry of Antichrists Apostacy, though the ministers be ministers thereof."[4] Thus it followed, as night the day, that the ministers of England, though ordained by the prelates and subject to them, could none the less be ministers of Christ in the full Congregational sense, "they preaching his word and administring his Sacraments."[5] "Those defects and errours, which are over and besides, many times they yeeld unto in their calling, entrance, and administration, are not of that nature and quality that they make a nullity thereof."[6] "We utterly deny," Ames proclaimed, "that the call-

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[1] Ames, A Manvdiction, sig. Q1 verso, Q2 recto.

[2] Ibid., sig. Q2 recto.

[3] Jacob, A Confession and Protestation, p. 19.

[4] Bradshaw, op. cit., p. 61.

[5] Ibid., p. 22.

[6] Ibid., p. 142.

ing of our ministers doth essentially depend upon the bishops calling,"[1] and for that reason he could maintain with a clear conscience that "though the prelacie were plucked vp by the rootes, yet the parochiall ministrie might stand still, in all the substantiall parts of it."[2]

The root of the difficulty was this very prelacy, and Ames and Bradshaw had a beautiful way of disposing of it in order to complete their proof of the church's essential rectitude. The episcopacy, they declared, was not at all an integral part of the institution. It was simply an unfortunate combination of two distinct aspects which needed only to be resolved into separate incarnations for the whole problem to disappear. In so far as the jurisdiction of the bishops was "external and coactive", it "must of necessitie bee a civill power, such as the King might as well performe by other civill officers."[3] The prelates were "generall visitors and overseers of Churches," appointed by the magistrate; they were "generall commissioners under the King to see that the Pastors doe their duties,"[4] and as such they fulfilled a legitimate function. But through an accident of history the men who were given this civil jurisdiction happened also to be ministers; originally

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[1] Ames, A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies(1633), Part II, p. 207.

[2] Ames, A Manvdiction, sig. Q3 recto.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bradshaw, op. cit., pp. 77, 49.

bishops were simple pastors who used a wrongfully acquired power to usurp a superiority over other churches and to perpetuate a hierarchy. But nevertheless they remained "in substance" ministers, and their calling was remotely lawful. If they would but dedicate themselves to their purely religious duties and surrender their civil power to the proper civil officials, then they would all, bishops and archbishops and all their trains, return to their particular churches on a parity with all other ministers. "It is possible for them notwithstanding, to be members in theire estate, of a true visible Church, and be bound ... to one particular congregation, for the speciall ministery and government thereof."[1] They were pastoral stars which had wandered from their orbits and they only needed to be restored to their pristine courses for order to reign once more in the ecclesiastical universe. Their usurpation was grievous, but was only a corrupt appurtenance "to those lawfull actions, & not the substance wherto all the rest apperteynes."[2] The Non-conformists, Ames told Bishop Morton, had no aversion to the churches of England, but they accounted the hierarchy a step-dame, a creature of man's making that "may more lawfullie be remoued when it pleaseth man, then ever she was by him erected."[3] He was sure that the largest part of the "faithfull

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1 Ibid., p. 44.

2 Ames, A Second Manvdiction, p. 22.

3 Ames, A Reply to Dr. Mortons Generall Defence, sig. A4 recto.

congregations of England" would willingly be rid of the bishops,[1] thus attesting that they were stirred by obscure recollections of their pristine Congregationalism, that they were secretly aware they were not "spirituall parts of a diocesan spirituall church ... though civilly combined into a diocesan government."[2] They were, once again, true churches in substance and should not be separated from.

Thanks to such deft strategems men of this Congregational stripe were always prepared to protest at length that they were not Separatists, even at the very moments they were erecting independent churches in England or gathering them on foreign shores. In such actions they averred they were pointing the way to reformation, but they decidedly were not separating from the other churches of the realm. They denied "a Nationall, a Provinciall & Diocesan Church under the Gospell to be a true visible politicall Church,"[3] yet they saluted the parishes, in which the essential customs of Christianity were preserved in spite of the usurped sway of the hierarchy. Since Jacob's congregation were persuaded many conforming ministers were ministers of Christ, and many conforming parishes became true parishes by willingly receiving their ministers, they did not think it just "wholly to separate from them and their Min-

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1 Ibid., p. 90.

2 Ames, A Second Manvdiction, p. 34.

3 Jacob, A Confession and Protestation, p. 14.

isterie, but are content, though with some griefe and sorrow, so far forth to ioyne with them in the worship of God, as they can without their personall Communion with them in those corruptions, which in their weakness they yeeld vnto."[1] As for the establishment of the Southwark church, that was merely an endeavor to renovate principles which were imbedded in all English parishes, principles upon which they had been founded and to which they would surely revert en masse as soon as their eyes were opened to the errors of their religious way.

Puritan Congregationalists put themselves through the labyrinthine processes of this reasoning in the fond hope that even while demonstrating their loyalty to the scriptural discipline, they might salvage their allegiance to the principle of compulsory uniformity, that they would, in fact, conclusively prove the discipline and the principle to be indisolubly knit together. They were trying to show that men who wished simply to realize potentialities already in the church were far different from men who wished to destroy it and begin anew. Those who never questioned that they should be coerced into orthodoxy, even when a temporarily misguided monarch was commanding wrongful things, might reasonably be considered loyal Englishmen. If, as was agreed, a schismatic was a person who willfully divided himself from a true church, then Ames and his friends were none such. They had not withdrawn, they had

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[1] Jacob, A Christian and Modest offer [1606], p. 39.

avowed the Church of England to be at least a collection of true churches. It was forbidden, Parker argued, "to call any man a schismatique that acknowledgeth the Supremacie of the Prince, and liveth vnderneath the obedience of it, as all the world knoweth we doe."[1] They had subjected themselves to their governors "to doe to vs whatsoeuer they please," and if they refused subscription to some ceremonies there was "neither contempt nor scandall"[2] in their refusal. If they were deprived for it, that did not prove them traitors, for they were put out by the usurping power of their adversaries:

> They do not separate themselves from the Church, neither do they (indeed) forsake the Ministry of the Gospel, which they desire (before all worldly benefits whatsoever) to execute with a good Conscience, but are thrust from it. 3

They denied that any ecclesiastical authority had a right to expel ministers from particular churches, but just so soon as the King himself authorised the expulsion, though it remained intrinsically an unjust act, still as it was the act of a magistrate they did not except against it. They still were obliged to withhold their subscription, but they willingly undertook to suffer the consequences; though they refused, they were therein "neither Schismatiks, Seditious persons, enemyes to the

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1 Parker, A Scholasticall Discovrse Against Symbolizing with Antichrist (1607), Part II, p. 116.

2 Ibid., p. 33.

3 Bradshaw, "A consideration of certain Positions Archepiscopal" (1605), Several treatises (1660), sig. A3 verso.

Kings Supremacie, nor any way undutifull to King or State."[1] They were sure the King was doing wrong, but they would abide by his decision to show him they were good citizens. "God nowhere commands a minister to minister publikly in a publik Church maintained by the Magistrate, against the will and despite of the Magistrate."[2] An English church might rest assured that though a magistrate took away her minister "unjustly, & against the will of the Church, and should therein sinne; yet doth not the Church in that regard cease to be a Church;" she had already survived more abuses than that, and she could stand many more rather than refuse obedience. If the magistrate had "matter against us (whither just or unjust it skilleth not)," and forbade us to continue in our pastoral offices, "I see not by what warrant in Gods word we should thinke ourselves bound notwithstanding to exercise our ministry still." Nor had the church, however much she loved her pastor, any right

> to deprive her selfe of the protection of the Magistrate, by leaving her publick standing, to follow her ministery in private and the dark; refusing the benefit of all other publick ministerie, which with the leave and liking of the Magistrate, she may enjoy. [3]

The churches of England might suffer grievously by the rough dealing of the monarch, but like the true churches they were, they suffered in silence and humility, knowing that unless he

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1 Jacob, A Christian and Modest offer, p. 3.

2 Bradshaw, The Unreasonableness of the separation, pp. 91-92.

3 Ibid., pp. 90-91.

led them back into popery he could not undermine their essential constitution, and that however inconsiderate or even tyrannical he might seem to be, he was still the ordinance of God.

So, after their long journey around Robin Hood's barn, the Non-separating Congregationalists could safely reiterate the conventional political philosophy as their profound conviction. The magistrate's power to them was, of course, "the greatest of human powers," "the institution of God."[1] Subjects owed the traditional obedience to their rulers, should submit to them and pray for them even when they were tyrannical or heathen.[2] Though a civil office was abused, "yet that doeth not make all subjection to it vnlawfull,"[3] because "contempt of authority, and the offence thereby given to others, is by itselfe a sinne against the Law of God."[4] An excommunicated monarch retained all his civil powers unimpaired.[5] And since the churches of England were, after all, true churches, they were "such as the Princes of the earth are bound by God's Laws to maintaine and protect by their autority."[6] Bradshaw explicitly asserted that the supremacy granted by statute to Queen Elizabeth was "due in full and ample manner (without any limitation

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[1] Ames, Conscience, Book IV, p. 164.

[2] Ibid., Book I, p. 106.

[3] Ames, A Manvdiction, sig. Q3 recto.

[4] Ames, Conscience, Book I, p. 167.

[5] Bradshaw, English Puritanisme , p. 24.

[6] Bradshaw, The Unreasonableness of the separation, p. 31.

or qualification) to the King."[1] The King would, in fact, sin if he did not assume it, and the churches err damnably if they denied it to him. Regardless of his personal faith, the supremacy was tied to his "very Crown from which no subject or subjects have power to separate or disjoyne it".[2] By this inherent power he possessed the right to call ecclesiastical synods, and his ratification was necessary to the making of canons.[3] He should be judge over all ministers of the Gospel, not only for common crimes, "but even for the abuse of the Ecclesiasticall offices".[4] If a whole congregation fell into error, he had "power and authority to punish them for their fault".[5] Whatever he perceived in the churches contrary to the Word of God, he, upon his own initiative, ought "to procure and force the redress thereof, yea, though it be without the consent and against the will of the Ecclesiastical Governors themselves".[6] The forcible suppression of heresy was his most sacred duty:

If Heretikes be manifestly knowne and publikely hurt-

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1 Bradshaw, "A protestation of the king's supremacie" (1605), Several treatises (1660), p. 87.

2 Ibid., pp. 87-88.

3 Ibid., p. 93.

4 English Puritanisme, p. 30.

5 "A protestation", p. 99.

6 Ibid., p. 88.

> full, they are to be restrained of the Magistrate by publike power... and if they be manifestly blasphemous, and pertenacious, and stubborne in those blasphemies, may suffer capitall punishment. [1]

Jacob's congregation made repreated obeisance to this whole theory by petitioning James to put their worship under the supervision of "some subaltern civill officers" who could administer to them the "oath of your Maiesties supremacy & royall authority as the Lawes of the Land at this present do set forth the same",[2] and who would ever receive from them "a dew and iust accompt of their proceedings".[3] Finally, the protagonists of the polity rehearsed the usual Puritan arguments that it meant no threat to society. Congregationalism, they pleaded, would not level the classes, or obstruct the monarchy, "which they acknowledge to be the best kind of civill Government for this kingdome".[4] Jacob even promised that the church government for which he solicited would prove more compatible with the king's imperial sceptre than that of the Prelates,[5] and predicted it would settle "more vnitie and peace in truth a hundred times". If only "our Magistrates would shew vs their favor and aide (which our adversaries enioy) this that I say

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1 Ames, Conscience, Book I, p. 12.

2 Burrage, Early English Dissenters, II, 163-4.

3 Jacob, To the right High and mightie Prince, Iames, pp.13-14.

4 English Puritanisme, p. 10.

5 Jacob, op. cit., p. 8.

would quickly & universally bee evident".[1]

The rub, the constantly more galling rub, was that the adversaries did enjoy "favor and aide". The King failed utterly to see the point of Congregationalism's ingenious little schemes. When Jacob's petition of 1610 informed James that in his royal person was vested the power of overseeing churches, James commented on the margin, "Quhy, then, do ye not obey the Kinges lawes that are already maide, quhome ye grawnte to be your supreme magistrate?"[2] The elaborate casuistry of Non-separation convinced no one; though Robinson yielded some ground to Ames' persuasion he still recognized that much of the latter's Manvdiction was an "exercise of wit".[3] A subtle distinction between the Church's "substance" and "accidents" had little meaning to the churchmen: "it cannot bee shewed," pronounced Burgess, "because it is a non ens, a fiction ... The New-nothing of all the faithful Congregations collectiuely considered, is but a meere mistie and inexplicable speech made for a covert."[4] The gulf between the prelates and the Puritans could not be bridged by split hairs; the opposition was too irreconcilable, such a one "as there is betwixt the light which

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[1] Jacob, An Attestation of many Learned, Godly and famous Divines (1613), p. 177.

[2] John Waddington, Congregational History, II, 176.

[3] "A manvmission to a manvdiction," Mass. Hist. Soc., Coll., Ser. 4, I, 192.

[4] John Burgess, An Answer Rejoined to That Much Applauded Pamphlet of a Nameless Author (1631), Preface, p. 61.

commeth down from heaven, & that thicke mist which ariseth from the lowest pit."[1] Accumulated suffering no more convinced this brand of dissenters than it did the others that there might be a flaw in their program: "the more they haue sustayned for it, the more (by the mercy of God) they see the glorious evidence of it."[2] In spite of their extravagant adherence to the royal supremacy, the Congregationalists were preaching that the King was limited by the Word of God, by that which contained "all parts of the true religion, both for Substance and Ceremony, and a perfect direction in all Ecclesiastical matters whatsoever."[3] But the King and his church had already decided otherwise, and they were growing only more determined Puritans should buckle under. All reformers were being forced to make increasingly decisive choices between God and man. Congregationalists and Presbyterians could preach until they were blue in the face that no reform should be sought but at the hands of the magistrate, yet when the magistrate obviously failed them, the best instructions they could give their flocks was that "every man is to look to himself, that he communicate not with the evils of the times, induring what it shall please the State to inflict."[4] But even seventeenth century Puritans

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1 Ames, Preface to The Diocesans Trial, sig. A3 verso.

2 Jacob, A Christian and Modest offer, p. 8.

3 Bradshaw, "A protestation of the king's supremacy," p. 90.

4 Ibid., p. 94.

could not continue indefinitely to labor and suffer in vain. They kept hovering closer to the brink of rebellion, and Jacob ominously warned that if the prelates persisted in imposing the tenets of Arminianism, "& shall vrge them so hotely as they begin; both the Ministers & many of the people wilbe forced to leaue their ordinary standing in these Churches."[1]

As the Puritan predicament became more difficult and more hopeless, the Separatists seemed to see events proving their course wiser in the long run. They energetically renewed their cry that Separation had grown out of Puritan teaching, and they found in the crazy structure of Puritan Congregationalism an excellent case in point. Canne, in his able Necessity of Separation, quoted Bradshaw and Ames at length, and showed with smashing effectiveness that their polity unmistakably pointed to an ultimate schism. "I am sorry they laid such a snare, whereby to undo themselves."[2] Burgess told Ames, "Your Master Bradshawes very Arguments against conformitie are pretended by the Separatists, as grounds for their separation"; they themselves prove "their pedigree from you: and no man can deny it, who hath any forehead left."[3] Cotton tells us that in the reign of Charles Separatists were

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1 Jacob, op. cit., p. 39.

2 J. Canne, A Necessity of Separation (ed. Hanserd Knollys Society, 1849), p. 67; cf. pp. 131, 242.

3 John Burgess, An Answer rejoined, p. 236.

more favored by the authorities than Puritans,[1] and Roger Williams explains that we are not to marvel thereat: "it is a principle in nature to preferre a professed enemy, before a pretended friend." The bishops knew the Separatists were their enemies, and also that they were comparatively harmless,

> whereas the Puritans have professed subjection, and submitted to the Bishops ... And yet (the Bishops have well knowne) with no greater affection, then the Israelites bore the AEgyptions cruell taskmasters. [2]

Along with all other Puritans the Congregationalists had identified themselves with the Parliamentary cause, and Ames had argued that the prelates had no right to enforce the Canons of 1604 when these had not been approved by Parliament.[3] With the dissolution of that body in 1629 the last hope of both sections of the party was gone. The issue was squarely and hopelessly joined. "Was it not," remembered Thomas Shepard of Cambridge in Massachusetts,

> Was it not a time when humane Worship and inventions were growne to such an intolerable hight, that the consciences of Gods saints and servants ... could no longer bear them? was not the power of the tyrannicall Prelates so great, that like a strong Current carryed all down stream before it? ... Did not the hearts of men generally faile them? [4]

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1 John Cotton, "Letter to Roger Williams"(1643), Publications of the Narragansett Club, I, 309.

2 Roger Williams, "Mr. Cotton's letter lately printed examined" (1644), Publications of the Narragansett Club, I, 200.

3 Ames, A Reply to Dr. Mortons Generall Defence, sig. B1 recto.

4 Thomas Shepard and John Allen, A Defence of the Answer Made unto the Nine Questions (London, 1648), p. 3.

Must we have stayed in England, he asked, and studied "some distinctions to salve our Consciences in complying with so manifold corruptions of Gods worship?" Adroit as the Congregational Non-separating subterfuge had been, it could not be maintained for ever. And if it could not, was Separation the only alternative? "Should wee forsake the publique Assemblies, and joyne together in private separated churches?" No, that would have been suicide: "how insufferable it would then have been, the great offence that now is taken at it is a full evidence."[1]

It was, then, at this opportune hour, when all the tried intents had seemed to fail, that still another solution loomed over the troubled horizon. If a body of Puritans could be carried into a virgin wilderness, and be carried legally, so that the government they set up there might claim legitimate descent from the crown, then the civil war of the spiritual and political loyalties could be reconciled. In a new state erected in accordance with Puritan ideals, the refractory magistrate could be brought into line. At the same time, because those who emigrated would come from that section of Puritanism which had never separated, they could call any church they established part of the Church of England, and, therefore, by grace of magistrates of their own creating, could enforce complete obedience to it. They could, in other words,

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[1] Ibid., p. 4.

figuratively but effectively transport both the English state and church to Massachusetts and there reform them at will. Massachusetts would be a piece of England as all England ought to be. Could God have expected us, Shepard once more queried, to remain helpless in England, futilely protesting and only finding a "way to have filled the Prisons ... when a wide door was set open of liberty otherwise?"[1] Through a remarkable concatenation of historical events, at that very moment a door of liberty was indeed thrown open to those who were able to walk through it, and by the unwitting hand, ironically enough, of no less a person that King Charles himself.

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[1] Ibid., p. 4. The reasoning behind the great migration, which we have to reconstruct from such stray passages as we can cull from later works, can be supplemented by the thinking of the Pilgrim migration some ten years earlier. As we have seen, the Separatist problem, from the Separatist standpoint, was practically the same as the Puritan: it was an attempt to hitch the divine discipline and the civil maintenance of orthodoxy to the same cart. The removal to Holland did not solve the question, and Robinson's congregation undertook the voyage to America to work out a more perfect answer. Before they left, Robinson made them a speech, in which the central problem of seventeenth century dissent appears explicitly:

> Whereas you are to become a body politik, using amongst your selues ciuill government ... let your wisdome and godlinesse appeare ... in yeelding vnto them [magistrates] all due honour and obedience in their lawfull administrations, not beholding in them the ordinarinesse of their person, but God's ordinance for your good; nor being like vnto the foolish multitude, who more honour the gay coate, then either the virtuous mind of the man, or the glorious ordinance of God. But you know better things, and the Image of the Lords power and authority which the Magistrate beareth, is honourable in how mean persons soever. And this dutie you may the more conscionably performe, because you are at least for the present to haue onely them for your ordinary gouernours, which your selues shall make choice of for

(1 cont.)

> that worke. (Mourt's Relation [1622], ed. Henry Martyn Dexter, 1865, p. xlvi)

The whole key to the Puritan and Separatist migrations is imbedded in this passage. In order that they might continue to behold in magistrates the ordinance of God, they had to escape from those who refused to live up to the part and to choose for themselves some that would. And above all the principle that the magistrate was the ordinance of God had to be preserved.